

Breathing Techniques for 1st Stage of Labour



During the 1st stage of labour we use our breathing to stay relaxed, calm and to conserve energy for the pushing stage (2nd stage of labour).

Directions:

- At the start of the contraction breathe in through your nose, into your tummy and allow your tummy to expand.
- Breathe out through your mouth and allow your tummy to soften.
- You can practice by placing one hand on your chest and the other on your bump, your hand on your bump should rise as you breathe in.
- Try to make your breath out longer than the breath in e.g. breathe in for 3 seconds, out for 6 seconds.
- As the contraction increases in intensity, you may feel the need to quicken your breath to match the intensity of the contraction. Continue to focus on expanding the tummy and keeping your breaths out longer.
- At the peak of the contraction it can help to 'puff, puff, blow':
 - Through pursed lips do two puffs out and then a longer blow like imagining you are almost trying to blow out a candle.
- As the peak of the contraction passes, return to deep tummy breathing.
- Once the contraction has ended sigh out any tension that has built up in the shoulders, arms and jaw.

We recommended you and your birth partner practice this technique before labour. Follow this link to see a video describing these breathing techniques:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xx1cH08ca-k>